29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8



Christianity with its emphasis on the value of the individual soul has failed to eradicate it entirely in civilized countries. The Eskimos knew nothing of obstetrics or "child welfare," nothing of any branch of medicine; and the mother received little consideration, according to our standards, before and after her child was born. Instead of resting quietly at home, relieved of her heaviest duties and concentrating on the care of her babe, she performed all her usual tasks up to the moment of parturition, and resumed them within a few hours of delivery. Until the child gained strength to walk alone she carried it everywhere on her back, from morning till night, except when a brief respite from work permitted her to lay it among the bed-skins and personally watch over its safety; the ravenous dogs would make short shrift of an infant left unguarded within the hut or tent. On long winter marches she sometimes wrapped it in warm caribou robes and lashed it on top of the sled; but in summer it rode on her back-pack, which was not lightened in any way to compensate for the additional load. Then there was its food. Cow's milk and cereals did not exist for these Eskimos, and no babe could survive on fish and flesh, the only foods the country yielded. When the child began to walk it might swallow a morsel or two of seal or caribou meat well masticated by the parents, but for three years and even longer